Sanctions on Iran

2703. SHRI D. RAJA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that United Nations Security Council has voted to impose fresh set of sanctions against Iran despite the satisfactory resolution of all concrete issues surrounding its previous nuclear activities; and

(b) if so, the details and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Yes. On 3rd March, 2008, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1803, calling for: (i) an expansion of travel restrictions to more Iranian individuals; (ii) prohibiting the sale, supply or transfer of dual use items to Iran; (iii) imposing a freeze on assets of Iranian individuals and entities listed in the resolution, and requiring the exercise of vigilance with regard to extending new export credits and activities of financial institutions with all banks domiciled in Iran; and (iv) inspection of cargo to and from Iran if there are reasonable grounds to believe that these contain goods and items prescribed by UNSC Resolutions 1803, 1737 and 1747.

Government's consistent view has been that Iran has a right to develop peaceful use of nuclear energy while fulfilling all its obligations and commitments. The Iran nuclear issue should be resolved through peaceful diplomacy, and the framework of IAEA provides the best forum to address technical aspects of the issue.

Issues discussed with US President

2704. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the specific issues discussed with US President and other officials during his recent visit to the US;

(b) whether any agreements were signed between the two Governments as a result of the discussions held; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) External Affairs Minister visited Washington, USA during 24-25 March, 2008. He called on US President Mr George Bush and met his counterpart, US Secretary of State, Dr Condoleezza Rice and discussed all aspects of Indo-US relations including economic ties, defence cooperation and the civil nuclear agreement, as well as regional issues. Important international developments including climate change and the need for a successful conclusion of the Doha Round were also discussed.

(b) No.

(c) Does not arise.

Celebration of Indian festivals

2705. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS:
SHRI BALAVANT *ALIAS* BAL APTE:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been an increase in the celebrations of Indian festivals in foreign countries during the last few years;

(b) if so, the names of festivals and places where celebrations are organized collectively;

(c) whether Government provides them any help; and

(d) whether foreign Government also provides assistance, if so, the names of the countries?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Yes, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations coordinated the holding of the Festival of India in Brussels from October, 2006 to January, 2007 and Festival of India in Japan from December, 2006 to December, 2007. The two Prime Ministers recently inaugurated the Year of Russia in India on 12th February, 2008. The Year of India in Russia is planned for the year 2009. A Festival of India is also being organised in the Netherlands in November, 2008.

(c) and (d) These events are organised on the basis of reciprocity. The standard norms provide for sharing of financial commitments. The sending side pays for international travel of artistes and performance fee. The sending side also bears the cost of freight of equipment and insurance of exhibits. The receiving side pays for boarding and lodging of the groups, domestic travel and presentation cost.

Indian soldiers in jails of Pakistan

2706. SHRI ABDUL WAHAB PEEVEE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether some Indian soldiers are interned in Pakistan jails;

(b) whether it is also a fact that a Flag Officer of the Indian Air Force, belonging to 20th squadron A-7 of the Indian Air Force has also been lodged in Pak jail since 1971;

(c) whether the relatives of the PoW (Prisoners of War) who hails from Kerala, has approached Government to trace the officer; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) 74 Missing Defence Personnel including 54 since 1971 are believed to be in jails in Pakistan. Shri K.P. Muraleedharan, a Flying Officer of Indian Air Force is believed to be amongst them.

(c) and (d) Yes. Government have received a representation from his sister. She has been informed of the efforts Government are making to trace Missing Defence Personnel in Pakistan.

Help to Sikh militancy

2707. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:
SHRI AMAR SINGH:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that Pakistan's ISI is making all out bid to revive Sikh militancy in India;